

October 23, 2003

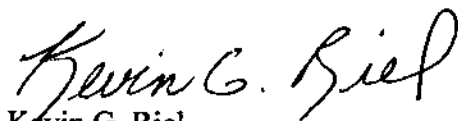
The purpose of my testimony is to inform the USDA of my opposition to the proposed Hop Marketing Order.

My family has been growing hops for over 55 years in Washington State, and experienced it's greatest losses at the end of the last Hop Marketing Order. I do believe some growers did benefit from the last order, however all growers did not. In my opinion it was extremely inequitable. The result of this was that my family was forced to idle all of our hop acres for a term of three years, all the while holding base allotment for these acres.

We started our recovery from this position in 1987 with only half of our hop acreage in production. Since that time, under the free market system, we slowly improved our situation, and in my opinion, have flourished. Initially we were able to purchase or lease land and replace our lost hop acreage. In 1997 we purchased a neighboring hop operation to expand our business. Since that time we have continued to invest in the hop industry by adding and improving large capital assets and increasing the quality of the product that we deliver to our customers.

I do recognize the challenges that this industry is facing, however I feel these are best dealt with by individuals making decisions that are best for themselves. I do not wish to have a committee of my fellow growers deciding my family's fate in this industry, and I believe that I am not qualified to make decisions for them. Each grower must be allowed to find his or her solution to the current and future issues in the hop industry free and clear of involvement from others.

In closing, although opinions may vary about the success or failure of the last Marketing Order, I believe that human nature will lead any new marketing order to the same consequences. No amount of questioning or cross examination will change my opinion that the pain and scars suffered by my family are a result of the failure of the last order.



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